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TELECON
Eric Severeid/The Secretary
November 26, 1975
Time: 12:37 p. m.

RELEASED IN FULL

K: Hello, Eric, how are you?

S: Pretty good.

K: Somebody brought to my attention a commentary you made yesterday in which you stated as a fact that I leaked the Schlesinger change in order to keep the President from changing his mind.

S: One of your people did.

K: None of my people did.

S: I am sorry I have to disagree with you.

K: Do you know for a fact that one of my people did?

S: I have no doubt about it.

K: You know we reached a lovely point when a Secretary of State can be accused of these things when for a week I voted against this change. When you say one of my people did say it was done in order to keep the President from changing his mind because I wanted Schlesinger out, is that what you think?

S: One of your people did and boasted about it. I didn't use it for Time and maybe I shouldn't have used it now.

K: It is practically inconceivable to me. I know you are a serious person and you didn't do it maliciously.

S: You know I am not. If I said all the things I should say ...

K: If one of my people did it, only one or two of my people knew about the scheme and knew I was violently opposed to it.

S: They shouldn't claim credit for it then.

K: They shouldn't. They certainly shouldn't do this.

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- S: It is a hell of a g. d. atmosphere here.
- K: It is an awful atmosphere. I want to tell you on my word of honor, if this still counts in this city, I didn't know about it until after I got back from China. I opposed it not because we didn't get on but because it wouldn't solve any of the problems. If there was a motive for leaking it, it was to freeze the decision lest I change his mind. If any of my people did it, which I tell you is almost inconceivable, since they knew my views, they did something absolutely outrageously against my desires. But do you know this as a fact? This is for my own information and not to criticize you. Have you heard one of my people do this?
- S: I can't go into that. I am not a careless person. I just avoid printing a lot of these things even if they are true. I have no doubt about this.
- You
- K: I have no doubt that the man did.
- S: At least he boasted he did at the time and right after this.
- K: I find this shocking. I find this absolutely shocking.
- S: Well, Henry, God bless you.
- K: All I want you to know, if he did -- if anyone else had told me I wouldn't believe it. It is even worse than I thought it is. One or two confidants that I had who knew about it would respect this decision. There were no victories gained in this thing and on the Moynihan thing there was no debate between him and me except on an adjective here and there. But that is a different matter. That was your opinion. I don't protest about that.
- S: Well, Henry, I don't know what to do about these things. It is my birthday today. What a way to start the day.
- K: You know how I idolize you and since I consider this a moral issue, that is why I called you.
- S: If I can find out that I am wrong on this I will let you know, but I don't think so.

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- K: If you are right, I am very shocked.
- S: It is a shocking world.
- K: The only people I discussed this with before the event were my closest friends because I was so terribly troubled and if they have done this, then this town is even worse off than I thought it was.
- S: There is always that remote possibility that somebody was boasting. I don't know why he took the credit for something.
- K: This was not a victory for anybody. OK, Eric, happy birthday.